

Asambeho Brassband

Since the 1960s, carnival has danced to the beat of the Arubian brassband music known as 'Asambeho'. Traditional brassband music has been played on Aruba since the formation of the first Arubian brassband at the Pan-Am Club of San Nicolas in 1930. On March 7th of that year, the Aruba Refinery Brassband was established with between 20 and 25 musicians.³⁰ This music was not particularly suited for dancing in carnival, so two San Nicolas musicians -- Arnold Beyde and his colleague Samuel Hodge -- began to experiment with different rhythms. They wanted to develop a sound for the brassband that would provide a fitting musical accompaniment for jump-ups and parades.

Blending the music of the samba, calypso, and the marching band, they created a brassband music with a sound, rhythm and beat suitable for dancing. The melody of the Asambeho is carried by wind instruments -- the trumpet, trombone, and saxophone, while the beat is carried by a bass drum, a light drum, and a snare drum. The infectious music made its debut in 1967 when the band accompanied the Goldfinger Fan Club carnival group. The name for this novel music, however, was not chosen until several years later through a 1985 contest. Asambeho derives from a combination of the authors names -- Arnold SAMuel BEyde HOdge. The fact that the Asambeho has been embraced by all Arubians has made the music a new symbol of national identity. A recent comment by the Minister for Health, Sport and Culture, Dr. Lili Beke, states that "One of the treasures [of our island] is the rhythm born here, Asambeho, which will finally receive its place. ...It will become another identity of Aruba, just like our language, Papiamentu".³¹